

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Form-Based Codes**

### **1. What is a Regulating Plan?**

A Regulating Plan is the key to the Form-Based Code. It provides specific information on the permitted development for each lot or parcel, particularly as the lots relate to the public spaces (streets, squares, parks, etc.) and surrounding properties. In some ways, it is comparable to a zoning map.

### **2. What are Building Envelope Standards?**

Building Envelope Standards (BES) are one component of the Form-Based Code. They regulate future building in three dimensions, with criteria for *height*, *siting*, *building elements* (such as windows, doors, balconies, etc.), and *uses*.

### **3. What is a Required Building Line?**

A Required Building Line (RBL) is the location on each property/parcel near the street or road right-of-way where building fronts are placed. It can be used to develop a traditional village main street with buildings that front sidewalks and help to create a pedestrian environment or define/establish a neighborhood street with detached houses and complementary front yards. Many properties in LBRN will not have an RBL, using a set-back instead.

### **4. How tall will the buildings be?**

The Form-Based Code will provide both minimum and maximum building heights, which will vary in different parts of the LBRN area. (Community input will be very important in establishing the height parameters.) Once the Code is adopted, the potential (or required) height for any specific location or parcel in the LBRN Area can be determined using the Regulating Plan and Building Envelope Standards (*see above*).

### **5. How tightly can uses be controlled in a form-based coding environment?**

Uses can be controlled as strictly in a form-based environment as in the conventional zoning system; however, in the LBRN Area uses will be regulated primarily through the building form, while providing broad parameters for permitted uses (that will include specific prohibitions for undesirable or inappropriate uses for sub-areas within the district.) Other issues will be addressed through management and/or specific use permits.

**6. Are there any examples where form-based codes have been successfully implemented?**

Historically in the United States, many towns regulated development through systems which were primarily form-based. (Two well-known examples are Chicago and Old Town Alexandria in Virginia.) More recently, form-based regulations have been used most frequently in developing new planned communities, but are increasing in popularity for existing cities, towns and rural areas, particularly those that are encouraging (traditional) infill redevelopment or are concerned about protecting/enhancing the existing form and character of the community (or a specific district.) Some of these locations are: Arlington, Virginia; Contra Costa County, California; Iowa City, Iowa; Hercules, California; Fayetteville, Arkansas; and Woodford County, Kentucky.

**7. Will adoption of a form-based code require changing existing zoning?**

Form-Based Codes can be adopted under a variety of scenarios, including changing/replacing the existing zoning, creating a special district, or an optional overlay district.

**8. Can the form-based approach be applied countywide, particularly in existing towns and residential neighborhoods with single-family residences?**

The form-based coding approach can be applied at a countywide scale; however, the LBRN Area Form-Based Code should not be thought of as a “one-size-fits-all” document. Different parts of Baltimore County have very different character and play different roles/function differently. Because a form-based code is created/written to result in the development (or in this case, the protection and maintenance) of a physical place, such as a waterfront village, or simply “rural”, it is necessary to have a clear vision of that desired place to inform/produce the Code for each specific area (although clearly there will be some base similarity between some neighborhoods.) Form-based codes are proving to be particularly adept at regulating new infill development in existing residential areas to respect the existing character/context and prevent new out-of-scale development.

**9. How does form-based coding mitigate conflicting noise, glare, and etc. between different uses?**

Many of the issues of conflict between adjacent uses are mitigated through regulating the building form (in 3 dimensions.) Simply put, many building forms do not readily lend themselves to particular noxious uses. Additional issues, such as glare, are addressed through both the Building Envelope Standards and the Architectural Standards, where elements such as lighting and signage are regulated. Finally, items of concern that are not mitigated through the Code itself can be regulated/managed specifically through specific use permits.